

# INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE

## COURSE OF MATERIA MEDICA

IN THE

University of Pennsylvania,

DELIVERED OCTOBER 21st, 1847.

BY GEO. B. WOOD, M. D.

Philadelphia:

PRINTED BY JOHN YOUNG, BLACK HORSE ALLEY.

1847.

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## C O R R E S P O N D E N C E.

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*Philadelphia, October 30th, 1847.*

DR. WOOD:

*Dear Sir,—*At a recent meeting of the members of the Class, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to wait upon you, and express their thanks for your very able and eloquent introductory address, and to request a copy of the same for publication.

In communicating their wishes, permit us, sir, to add our personal solicitations, and hope that you will comply with the request.

Yours, very respectfully,

CHAS. T. ABERCROMBIE, Ala.,

PHILIP C. HARTMANN, Cuba,

BENJ. R. CARMAN, Buenos Ayres,

*Committee.*

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To Messrs. Charles T. Abercrombie, Philip C. Hartmann, and Benjamin R. Carman, Committee of the Medical Class of the University of Pennsylvania.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have received your note of the 30th of October, requesting, on behalf of the Medical Class, a copy of my introductory address for publication. I feel obliged by the flattering terms in which you speak of the address, and cheerfully place it at your disposal.

Accept for yourselves, and the members of the class, the assurance of my kindest regards.

Sincerely your friend,

GEO. B. WOOD.

*Philadelphia, Nov. 1st, 1847.*



## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

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I greet you, gentlemen, warmly, and welcome you heartily to these halls. You come to gain knowledge; and I am one of those appointed to aid you in its attainment. In order that the greatest amount of benefit may flow from this relation, it is necessary that there should be mutual good-will and confidence. You will listen more attentively to one whom you know to be actuated by a friendly interest in your welfare; and to me teaching would be an irksome task, without the cheering conviction of kindly feelings on the part of those around me. I proffer to you my heart, gentlemen; and I ask for yours.

It is usual, on occasions like the present, to introduce and recommend to the audience the particular science or branch of knowledge, which may have been specially allotted to the speaker, in the course of scholastic instruction. Compliance with this custom would require that I should address you on the subject of *Materia Medica*. But I feel strongly called upon, by the interesting crisis now existing in the general concerns of our profession, and especially by the somewhat novel posture of our own school, to leave for once the path of routine, and endeavour to lead you to a broad view of your interests and duties in the great field of labour you are about to enter.

To the beginning student it is all-important to form a proper estimate of the requirements, duties, and responsibilities of the profession, for the practice of which he is about to prepare himself. According to the notions he may entertain on these points, will be his diligence, energy, and perseverance, and his consequent success, in the work of preparation. Should his views be narrow, and his aims low and sordid, it will be in vain that the teacher may point out the way, and offer all requisite aid; the inner moving spirit will be wanting; time and powers will be

wasted in sluggishness or self-indulgence ; and the end will be as grovelling as the outset. On the contrary, should he fix his eye upon some lofty height as the aim at once of his duty and ambition ; he will be stimulated to ceaseless effort ; all that is noble within him will be stirred into action ; at every additional step of ascent, he will feel the invigorating influence of a purer and fresher spiritual atmosphere ; and, even if he fail to attain the pinnacle of his hopes, he will find himself immeasurably elevated above the base level of mere animal existence.

It appears to me, therefore, to be strongly obligatory upon those who constitute themselves, or may be appointed as guides in professional study, while they lay before the young aspirant a just view of the whole scope of his future avocation, to point especially to its higher and nobler objects, and to address their appeals to the pure and spiritual, rather than to the sordid elements of his nature. The flesh is strong enough of itself. Our mere animal impulses require no encouragement. Sensuality, the brute passions of our nature, the love of indolent self-indulgence, sufficiently clog the wings of the spirit, sufficiently weigh down our being towards a degrading earthliness, without the superadded influence of truckling subserviency, sophistical excuse, or base counsel, on the part of those to whom we look for strength in our weakness, and guidance in our inexperience. The noble seed of the spiritual which is planted in our earthly nature requires to be carefully watered and cherished, especially in its earlier growth ; but then how beautiful in full maturity ! how rich in fruits ! how grateful in the sight of both God and man !

The occupation of the physician may be viewed in various lights, each one of which casts its own peculiar hue over the whole future of the student. It may be regarded in reference to its pecuniary results, to its social honours, to its scientific opportunities, and to its general usefulness ; and, as the views and inclinations of the student may take one or the other of these directions, will be the reflected influence on his own sentiments and conduct. It may be said that very few have but a single

motive in the choice of a profession. This is probably true ; but a preferable inclination towards some one of its presumed advantages is not uncommon ; and the effects of such preference, though less in degree, are the same in character as those of an exclusive partiality. It will, therefore, be profitable to investigate the probable influences of each of the before-mentioned relations of medicine, and to endeavour to deduce lessons that may be useful to the learner in shaping his future course, so that it may conduce to his own greatest good, and to the greatest good of his fellow-men.

Let us suppose, in the first place, that the student looks upon the practice of medicine solely as a money-making business, and has been influenced in his choice by the impression, that it promises advantages, in this point of view, superior to those of any other accessible trade or occupation. Of course, he will consider as quite unnecessary all preparation not essential to the attainment of his ends. It is not so much his wish to be a skilful physician as to have the credit of being so ; for it is the latter which is to secure him business. He will, therefore, devote as little labour, time, and money to preparation as possible. A degree may be necessary as an evidence to the public of his competence. A degree, therefore, he must have ; but he will seek it where it can be had the easiest and the cheapest, at least with a due regard to the opinion of those among whom his lot is to be cast. Having thus got through his period, I will not say of study, but of apprenticeship, he sets up business for himself ; and now comes the deteriorating effect of his false position upon his moral character. A series of deceptions must be commenced. Ignorance must be concealed by a knowing look, and a grave deportment ; questions must be answered, not in reference to the truth, but so as to satisfy the questioner ; every favourable event must be magnified into an extraordinary result of skill, and each failure ascribed to the fault of others, or to inevitable necessity. A guard must be kept upon every word and look. Thus the whole life becomes an habitual falsehood. Where public opinion is not too much enlightened, the arts of the empiric are resorted to ; secret nostrums, boasting advertise-

ments, certificates genuine or forged, and various ingenious contrivance to wheedle money from credulous ignorance and simplicity. Should some new scheme of medical insanity or imposture arise, and carry with it the susceptible multitude, the opportunity is often eagerly seized to launch into the flood, in the hope that it may bear on to fortune. Hence the numerous renegades from regular medicine to Thompsonian, Homœopathy, Hydropathy, and other less notorious forms of medical folly or imposture. I do not say that this will, in all instances, be the result of a mere business view of the profession; but such assuredly is its tendency; and we have only to look around us to behold the most deplorable examples of its effects. And now I would ask you, gentlemen, what is the value of success thus attained? The animal appetites may be pampered, the love of ostentatious display indulged, and an inflated vanity may strut, like a ruffled gobbler, before the gaze of the multitude. But, with all the gratifications that wealth can purchase, there is a secret and ever-present consciousness of an ineffaceable stain; a brand upon the forehead; a contamination which must descend to generation after generation; an inheritance of disgrace, to cease only when time shall have kindly obliterated the recollection of its source. I would infinitely rather hand down to my descendants the most abject poverty, coupled with an honorable name, than a princely fortune labelled everywhere with the inscription of quackery.

In the second place, the profession of medicine may be regarded merely in reference to the means which it affords of gratifying the love of fame, honour, and influence. It is undoubtedly true, that the great importance of our art, the high grade of attainment requisite to its legitimate exercise, and the elevated character, and eminent and various worth of many of our predecessors, have gained for it a prominent position among the avocations of men. We may say, with just pride, that our profession is among the highest in general esteem; and that its honors, if fairly earned, and fairly worn, constitute everywhere in this country a badge of respectability. It affords, too, ample

scope for the exercise of diversified talent, and the display of high moral qualities ; and in few of the peaceful walks of life, perhaps in none, does extraordinary merit win, during life, a more enviable reputation, or leave behind it a purer and more enduring memory. I know no earthly title more desirable than that of a great and good physician. It is not surprising, therefore, that ambition should frequently seek in our profession a field of enterprise ; and it is not improbable that the hope of distinction is the chief actuating principle of many who enter it. This, certainly, is vastly superior to the mere love of money ; superior both in its nature and effects. The student of medicine who is devoted to the pursuit of an honorable name in the paths of his profession, will be diligent and even eager in his preparation ; and, when he shall have begun his practical career, will be at once stimulated to a zealous discharge of his duties, and guarded against everything which the world regards mean or base. In the absence of higher and purer motives, the love of fame is in medicine a valuable principle of action ; and, mingled with such motives, is of vast utility, by inspiring increased energy into every impulse and movement. But, uncontrolled by benevolence and the sense of duty, it is liable to great perversion. Acting as a spur to the eager spirit of the young, it is apt to urge them headlong through their preparatory course ; so that the starting point in the great race of active life is reached prematurely, and without fitting qualifications. Ambition is ever overreaching itself. Under its influence, the student has his eye fixed on the goal of professional action ; and, instead of slowly and laboriously gathering up for future use and ornament all the wealth of knowledge that lies strewed along his path, is ever straining upon the leash of scholastic requisition, which too often gives way to his strength of will, and allows him to rush into the busy scene, with great hazard to his own well-being, and to that of the individuals who may trust him. This principle, therefore, like covetousness, if allowed exclusive sway, has a tendency to shorten injuriously the period of study, and to hasten prematurely that of practice ; though it has usually

this advantage over the more sordid passion, that it fills up the curtailed period with useful effort, instead of slothful self-indulgence ; that it lays itself out energetically to gain its ends by honorable exertion, instead of grudgingly investing a very feeble industry in the hope of usurious interest.

A third aspect in which medicine may be regarded is the purely scientific. Surely, no one of the pursuits of man affords ampler scope than this for the gratification of the love of knowledge. Not to speak of the collateral or auxiliary sciences of natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, &c., the study of man himself, of his physical and mental constitution, his structure, his functions, and the derangements to which these are liable, is of an extent ample enough to engage all the faculties, and of an interest deep enough to absorb all the affections of the most ardent votary. Occasionally an individual is met with who cultivates medicine in this spirit exclusively ; and it is a noble spirit, an unselfish, untiring, self-sacrificing spirit ; which, by its unseen and noiseless but never ceasing toil, not unfrequently works out results of incalculable value for humanity. Every one who cultivates the healing art should possess it in greater or less degree. It will give earnestness and patient perseverance to his endeavours, and render positively agreeable the otherwise often irksome duty of close mental labour. But in practice it has its disadvantages ; and, if not properly restrained and regulated, may prove a source of much evil. The votary of science is apt to regard everything in a scientific point of view, Exterior beauty, apparent adaptation to convenience or comfort, the striking and visible relations of things, engage little of his attention. Considering, probably, these outer qualities as the mere accidents of the inner substance, instead of being, as they really are, the grand results to which all the concealed machinery is directed, he overlooks them in great measure, while penetrating to the works beneath, exploring with eagerness the springs, the wheels within wheels, the levers and pulleys of each complicate apparatus, and losing himself in the contemplation of the wonders of contrivance which become every where developed under his dissecting hand. Without hesitation or scruple, he

defaces or destroys the most exquisite gem, to find out its inner nature ; tears in pieces the most gorgeous flower, to investigate its hidden structure ; and, with the merciless scalpel, annihilates the beauty that may have stirred the inmost soul of men, in search of some hitherto concealed secret of organization. Such a spirit is apt to forget the patient in the investigation of the disease. The sensibilities, the wishes, the hopes and fears of the sufferer or his friends, the various interests that may cluster around a sick bed, even the great result of life or death, are the mere exterior, upon which his eye gives a hasty and careless glance, while its eagle gaze is directed to the interior and secret workings of the disordered frame, and his whole soul is absorbed in the problem of the seat, nature, and cause of the disease. This love of science has even been accused of seeking its own gratification at the expense of the patient's safety. But, rejecting this charge as an unworthy surmise, we may readily admit that a practitioner of this class must be constantly in danger of offending patients, by evincing that he regards them merely as samples in natural history, and of overlooking, in his devotedness to the physical disorder, the various and most important aids to the cure which may be derived from attention to the moral agencies at his command. It rarely, therefore, happens, that the physician who is devoted to his profession merely as a science, is most successful either in gaining business or curing disease.

It yet remains to consider the profession in another light, that, namely, of its usefulness to mankind. The true mission of the physician is to alleviate the sufferings of disease, and to save or prolong life. To his charge is entrusted what is most precious in this world. This thought should never be absent from the recollection of the student or the practitioner. To the well-constituted mind it will serve as an ever-present and most powerful incentive to untiring industry in preparation, and to the employment of every faculty in the actual exercise of the profession. When you consider, my young friends, that for every hour now wasted, for every opportunity of gaining knowledge now neglected, a life may be lost hereafter ; when you call to

mind the horrors of a death not prepared for, the frequent wretchedness of survivorship, the long misery of the widow and orphan, the desolation of the childless, the tears, the agony, the despair of bereaved affection; and recollect that for all these a verdict of guilty or not guilty may hereafter be demanded at the bar of your conscience; you must experience the strongest possible support against the seductions of indolence and unlawful pleasure, and the solicitations of an undue eagerness to enter prematurely upon the period of responsibility. Not only a feeling of good-will to our fellow-men, but the highest convictions of duty also, and the most fearful sense of accountability for the discharge of a sacred trust, are inseparably associated with this view of our professional office. The soldier submits, without a murmur, to labor, suffering, danger, death itself, in his sad office of taking life: surely the physician should be equally patient, equally laborious, equally unflinching in his great duty of saving life. Such a view of our professional obligations, can lead only to good. It is altogether purifying and ennobling in its influence upon ourselves, altogether beneficent in its results to others. It is, therefore, the true view; that which the instructed physician should ever strive to keep before his own mental vision, and before that of the pupil who may trust to his guidance. It is that, gentlemen, which I would strongly urge upon you, as the one most conducive to your good in all respects.

I have thus endeavoured to develope the most prominent of the various influences under which the portals of medicine may be entered, and have pointed to the sense of duty and the feeling of good-will to men, as at once the most noble and the most truly useful. But, as human nature is constituted, we cannot expect that it should be governed wholly by such elevated motives. It is a most happy provision in our moral constitution, that if we but turn our faces in the right direction, the impulses which might, under other circumstances, drive us to evil, often urge us forward in the good path. Let us make the convictions of duty the guiding rule of our conduct; and, though we may find other

less exalted motives incessantly besetting us, yet will they frequently but serve to stimulate and strengthen us in an honorable course. Ambition, which may lead the corrupted spirit to the most atrocious enormities, widens for the upright the circle of beneficent effort ; the love of science, which of itself may bury our energies in profitless investigations, operates most powerfully for good in the minds of the truly virtuous ; even the love of riches, which as we are told is the root of all evil, may be so qualified by purer influences, as to lose much of its sordid character, and become even a useful principle of action. Though I would point you, therefore, to the noblest and purest of all principles as the guiding star of your life, I am far from desiring that the natural impulses of the heart should be eradicated. Seek, if you please, for reputation, honor, wealth ; but let your search ever be under the control of a sense of duty, and directed unswervingly to the good of others as well as to your own.

Now let us inquire, for a moment, what will be the practical working of these principles in your own peculiar case as students of medicine. Put the question to yourselves, gentlemen. Will they urge you to a hasty run through your studies, in order to reach the goal in the shortest possible time ? Will they make you content with venal honors, gained without labor, and borne with the consciousness that they are undeserved ? Will they cause you to oppose and thwart the measures which the profession you hope to enter may make for the increase of its honor and usefulness ? Assuredly, there can be but one answer to these questions.

You are all, I presume, aware that the medical profession in this country has recently awakened from a long sleep of apparent indifference. The spirit of progress has breathed upon it ; and the lethargy is passed. A voice was heard in the North, calling aloud for reform. The South, the East, and the West answered ; and the cry was echoed and re-echoed throughout the Union. The mind of the profession appeared to be stirred to its inmost depths ; and the body was soon in motion. A higher grade of qualification, more elevated principles of action, an acknowledged rule of medical ethics ; these were everywhere proclaimed as

the wants of the profession. These were the inscriptions every-where emblazoned on the banners of the new movement. At length the delegated wisdom of the profession met in council. The whole country spoke through its representatives; an extra-ordinary unanimity prevailed; only a few unsupported voices were heard in opposition to the general sentiment; and the great principles were proclaimed, which it is to be hoped, will lead our calling upward to that high moral position which accords with its nature and objects.

One of the great principles alluded to, was to improve the character of the profession by a more thorough education of those who are hereafter to become its members. This may be a slow, but it is a sure method of accomplishing the end pro-posed. It is not a few prominent men, scattered amid the ranks of a professional body, that give it dignity and importance. In-dividuals, here and there, may by extraordinary merit win great personal distinction; but, like prominent trees in a forest, shoot-ing up far above the level of the summits about them, they only make more evident the general humility of the multitude. It is by the elevation of great numbers only that a whole calling can be elevated. But from those already in the medical profession, it will be in vain, as a general rule, to expect a higher grade of attainment than that already possessed. Their habits are too much fixed; and, if this were not the case, their time is too much occupied to admit of material change. We, however, who constitute the medical body, take credit for wishing those who may come after us to rise to a higher level than ourselves. Throwing aside all petty jealousy, we are willing, nay we desire, and even labor, that those who succeed us may be better than we; that our own feeble light may be dimmed by a new splen-dour to rise above the professional horizon. It is a noble sight, gentlemen, to behold a great body of men, from a conviction of duty, and a feeling of professional pride, thus eager to raise up successors who shall eclipse their own fame.

But how is this great object to be accomplished? The pro-fection has, for the most part, no legal power to regulate admission into its body; the general legislature of the Union

has no constitutional authority to enact any restraining law; and the several state legislatures, if they could be induced to act at all, certainly could not be induced, in the present condition of popular sentiment, to act in concert, so as to produce a uniform result. The end, therefore, must be attained, if at all, through the agency of opinion. The recent medical convention appealed to this principle. They recommended to the members of the profession and the schools a course, which, if conscientiously pursued, will undoubtedly lead to the desired result. They recommended a more thorough preliminary education before admission into the office of a private preceptor; a longer continuance of the courses of instruction in the schools; higher requisitions for graduation than generally prevail; and the adoption of measures to ascertain with certainty, before graduation, whether the rules of the institutions have been complied with. At present we are concerned only with those points which have reference to the schools. With the schools themselves obviously rested the decision, whether they would or would not comply, and how far they would comply with these recommendations.

In relation to our own school, it was quickly determined, that, participating as we did in the proceedings of the convention, and heartily concurring in the propriety of most of the measures proposed, we were bound to an honest endeavour to carry them into effect, so far as circumstances should appear to us to admit. To comply literally with all, without delay, was quite impracticable; but, even in relation to the points, in which we could not at once come up to the standard of the convention, we felt disposed to enter into the spirit of that body, and to aim at the ultimate accomplishment of their purposes. To those informed upon the subject I need not say, that the requisitions to graduation, proposed by the convention, are in general those adopted by our own school, and long acted upon with a sincere desire to see them carried into full effect. One of the prominent changes recommended was the prolongation of the course of instruction from four to six months. This appeared to the Faculty to be the measure which most urgently called for their adoption. They had long been sensible of the

great disadvantage of crowding the necessary instruction into a space of time so restricted as the shorter period just mentioned. They knew that, to most students, it was quite impossible to remember and digest all the facts imparted during the limits usually assigned. They had often painfully witnessed the serious consequences of the overstraining of the faculties, and the want of necessary exercise and relaxation, to the ambitious or conscientious student; and were anxious to see this condition of things amended. On a former occasion, they had made the attempt to extend the course to five months, but succeeded only in lengthening it permanently to four months and a half. This, however, was something gained; and enabled them, in some measure, to lighten the burthen to the student. They now gladly seized the occasion to make another advance, under so authoritative a sanction as that of the late convention. They considered that, being the oldest school in the country, they would probably be looked to for a commencement of the movement; that, if they should not take the step, it might not be taken at all; and that if, after one season of trial, they should be supported in the measure, most of the schools would probably come into it, and the objects of the convention be thus far accomplished. Under such impressions, they resolved to lengthen the course to five months and a half, which is as close an approach to the designated period as seemed advisable in a first attempt. You are all aware that this decision was announced in due time to the medical public; and it is in compliance with that announcement that you are here on the present occasion. The University of Pennsylvania has the satisfaction to believe that she has done her duty in this respect. It yet remains to be determined whether she will be supported. And now, gentlemen, I come to your own speial concern in this business.

It has been said that the great body of the students are solicitous chiefly for the honor of graduation, and are indisposed to expend more time, labor, and money than is absolutely essential to the purpose. The reputation attached to the doctorate may be greater as obtained from one source than from another; and corresponding sacrifices may be made if exacted;

but still, it is said, the degree, and not the qualifications which it is supposed to imply, is the main object sought for. Are you willing, gentlemen, to rest under this imputation? Can it be true that the love of knowledge, the desire of an honorable and merited reputation, the sense of duty towards your fellow-men and your maker, have but a feeble existence in your bosom; and that what you are so zealously seeking is a mere testimonial, which may deceive the public into the belief of your competence? I do not believe this gentlemen. I could not believe it, and stand here as a teacher. Were I convinced that you had no real desire to learn, that all the instruction I could give would be looked upon as so much nauseous medicine to be swallowed by a sort of compulsion, I would assuredly relinquish my office on the instant, and, if I could not live otherwise, would turn to feeding pigs, or to some other equally honest avocation, in which my services would at least be acceptable to the recipient. No, my young friends, the thought is a libel upon your character. You are, I have not the least doubt, heartily desirous of self-improvement; and, though the various temptations which beset the young may turn some for a time from the path of labor, though all may occasionally tire of the heavy task allotted them, yet I do not believe that there is one among you who does not feel a desire for professional knowledge, and a pure satisfaction in its acquisition.

With these convictions of the character of the medical student, I can confidently appeal to you for acquiescence in the propriety of the course adopted by this school, in compliance as well with their own sense of duty, as with the general wish of the profession. You must assuredly know, that the period of time usually appropriated to instruction in the medical schools is quite insufficient for the proper reception and digestion of what is taught. How often has the experienced student felt his head ache with the confusion of over-crowded facts and opinions; how often felt his physical powers fail under the long sittings of the day, and the long vigils of the night; how often longed for time to store away and arrange the multitude of new thoughts, and for opportunity for that mental relaxation, bodily exercise, and pure air, which are essential to keep the very instrument of thought in order!

To those of you who have attended one full course of winter lectures, it is unnecessary to say, that the addition of one quarter to the allotted time will yield to the student greatly more than a proportionate increase of knowledge, while it will conduce materially to his mental and physical comfort.

The objections which naturally suggest themselves to the prolongation of the course are the increased expense to the student, and the longer separation from his friends and home. In relation to the former, I would merely repeat what was said in the recent circular of the University, that the only additional expense is the trifling sum required for a few weeks boarding, which is more than compensated by the diminution of the fees. In relation to the latter objection, my own experience has been, that it is the approach of the time of return, rather than the length of absence which occasions impatience; and, whether the period be four, or five, or six months, it is only near the close, when the thoughts are permitted to wander towards the endearing associations of home, that the irresistible longing is felt, which too often leads the student to break through his best resolutions, and desert before his time is out.

You must be convinced, I think, that your real interests as students of medicine coincides, in reference to the lengthening of the course, with the general opinion of the profession, and the resolution of this school. But there is another light in which I wish to place the matter before you. This is one of a series of efforts to elevate the character of the medical profession—of that profession to which you are to belong, and which many of you are no doubt eager to enter. Should the effort fail, the friends of improvement may be discouraged, and we may be compelled to fall back into that stagnant quiescence under deteriorating influences, from which the profession is now endeavoring to escape. Are you willing to become instruments of such an unfortunate issue? Are you willing, by throwing the obstruction of your masses across the current of improvement, to turn it back towards its sources to breed corruption and pestilence, instead of beauty and fertility? Remember that you are yourselves to become members of the profession; that, according to

its future position, will be your own ; and that, by aiding in its elevation, you are working for your personal good, as well as for that of your future brethren, and of the whole community. To ask you to do this at a great present sacrifice, might be asking more than could be expected from human nature. But surely, when the cost is so trifling, and the end so desirable, to doubt your willingness to join in the great movement, is much to underrate both your understanding and spirit ; in fact, to carry you back to the days of infancy, when a piece of candy or a sugar-plum outweighed the highest motives for self-improvement. I do believe, gentlemen, that your sympathies are with us in this movement ; and that even those whose predilections may lead them to other fountains of instruction, will carry with them convictions and dispositions, which will favor the advance of the great cause elsewhere.

In this endeavor to point out the true interests of the student, and, I will with candor say it, the coincidence of these interests with the regulations of our school, I must not omit another consideration having an important bearing on the subject. Graduation in medicine is a goal towards which the wishes of all spirited students are directed. I have before said that no one who has just notions of duty and interest, looks to this as the sole or even main object of pursuit. This would be to take the sign for the substance. But real merit should never scorn the outward expression of inner worth ; and we are told on the highest authority not to hide our light under a bushel. A degree may be honorably sought as a testimonial of attainment ; and the desire for it adds a stimulus, in every way unexceptionable, to other inspiriting influences. But there are two modes of viewing the diploma of the schools.

In the first place, it may be considered as a mere testimonial of the fact, that certain essential forms have been complied with, such as a fixed period of study, the purchase of tickets of admission to sundry courses of lectures, the attainment of a stipulated age, &c. The amount of real qualification is not concerned. Preliminary examinations are of course merely nominal, and might, with great propriety, be entirely dispensed

with. Indeed, with such a view of the character of the diploma, they ought to be dispensed with ; as they serve to deceive by suggesting that something more is required than actually is required, and thus give to the document a fictitious value. A degree of this kind is falsely entitled an honor. It is no honor ; it is scarcely the shadow of an honor. It may, in fact, be regarded as little more than a convenient epitome of the tickets. A candidate for medical practice might show his bundle of cards to prove that he had attended the requisite number of lectures ; but this would be inconvenient. The fact may be better expressed on a single piece of parchment. This is the whole real value of the degree of Doctor of Medicine granted upon the principle referred to. Is there any one among you, gentlemen, who would be satisfied with such a degree ? Is it at all worthy of the aspirations of a high-minded youth, acting under the principles which I have endeavored, early in this lecture, to impress on you as guiding rules in professional study ? If at first influential with the public from its nominal association with substantial honors, must it not gradually diminish in value as its hollowness becomes more generally known ; and at last, must it not sink into that utter insignificance which has been the fate of so many other titles, originally expressive of something positive, but which have been at last attenuated by time and abuse into mere sound—*vox et præterea nihil* ? Indeed, there is too much reason to think, that the once honored and honorable title of M. D., from whatever source derived, has already fallen much in public estimation ; and may not the result be ascribed to too close an approach, on the part of the schools, in practice at least, to the view here alluded to of the essential character of graduation in medicine ?

The other view of the diploma is in the light of a testimonial of qualification ; an evidence not only that the holder has gone through a certain prescribed routine, but that he has actually acquired knowledge sufficient, in the estimation of a majority of the signers, to justify him in commencing the practice of medicine. Thus considered, it has a real value ; a value proportionate to the estimate generally placed upon the judgment and

honesty of the signers. It may be an object worthy of the pursuit of the highest talent and worth. Such, it is our desire that the diploma of this school may be, and may be thought to be. Such, it has been the effort of the Faculty to make it. We have held it forth, and continue to hold it forth, as something to be earned, not bought. The examinations, therefore, are a reality. And, gentlemen, would you wish them otherwise? Would you have any real respect for us were we to make the degree a mere article of trade? and, after you had purchased the bauble, would you not blush to wear it? I take pride in assuring you, that you will have no occasion to be ashamed of the honors of this school. I do not say that they have never been unworthily conferred, or that they will never be unworthily conferred hereafter. Human judgment is fallible; and the very best intentions fail sometimes of corresponding results. But I do say that it has been the wish and effort of the Faculty, that the diploma should be a real certificate of merit.

There is, however, an undue apprehensiveness, on the part of some highly meritorious young men, in relation to the examinations. They fear mental confusion, and failure of memory. They apprehend a too high standard and too rigid rule of examination, and are apt to look on the Faculty rather as stern judges than as considerate friends. Now, permit me to assure you, that there is no ground for such fears. I do most sincerely say, that it is our anxious wish to find the candidates prepared; that the utmost caution is exercised not to decide hastily in any doubtful case; that every allowance is made for the very naturally disturbing influences of the occasion; and that our inclinations are all in favor of the young friends who place their future fate in some measure in our hands.

Nor are the Faculty unreasonable in their requisitions. They do not expect that the student should be able to answer every question that might be asked him. Not one physician in ten thousand could stand such a test. They require only such an amount of knowledge as may be reasonably expected from moderate study during the regular period; such an initiation into the mysteries of physic as may preserve the young physician from serious mistakes in practice, and enable him henceforward

to advance by his own unaided efforts. Do you wish, my young friends, for less than this? Would it be just towards the industrious to confound them with the idle? I engage to you, that, unless in cases of natural mental incompetence, such as we have no reason to suppose exists in any one of this audience, diligent study for the prescribed period shall secure you a degree; and I do sincerely hope, that no industrious and well-disposed young man will be turned from us by unnecessary apprehensions. But, if there be any one of your number, who, after throwing away his time in idleness or vicious indulgence, hopes to conceal his deficiencies under the cloak of medical honors; if there be one who considers the purchase money of his tickets, without any merit of his own, as ample compensation for the degree; I would say to him that our diploma is not for sale; that to be obtained it must be earned; and that, though our doors are open to all, we wish to secure the presence of none by false promises, or the suggestion of hopes that cannot be realized.

It will have been observed that, in speaking of this school, I have adverted to its regulations merely, and endeavoured to give the student a just view of their tendency, so that he may be led into no misconception. I might speak of its merits in other respects, and of the peculiar inducements which it offers to the spirited student to rank himself among its alumni. I might call your attention to the facts, that it was the first Medical School on this continent; that it has sent forth thousands of graduates who are scattered over the whole face of the Union, every where ranking among the most respected and honored of the land; that most of the names which stand highest in medical teaching and authorship in this country, both of the living and the dead, are to be found in our published Catalogue. I might ask you, if it be not a worthy object of ambition to be associated with men like these in one great fraternity, looking to one common alma mater as the beloved nurse of their professional infancy, and the proud spectator of their professional manhood. I might mention other recommendations of the school, founded on its means and capacities of imparting knowledge; but I confess to you that the system of self-laudation is distasteful to me; and I doubt the policy of a practice so readily imitated, and in which the advan-

tage lies with the strongest voice and the feeblest conscience. Of one thing, however, I may be permitted to assure you, that the members of the Faculty are all animated by a zealous desire to fulfil their several duties, in a manner most creditable to the school, and profitable to you.

Of the merits of my colleagues it would give me sincere pleasure to speak, were I not apprehensive that my motives might be misconstrued. Even at this risk, I cannot resist the feeling which exacts from me a just tribute to one of our number; the oldest and most honored; the last relic of the heroic age of this school; the associate of Rush, Wistar, Barton, and Physick; a link between the activity, enterprize, and energy of the present times, and the glories of the past. It is our boast that we have among us the patriarch of our profession; the physician whom the unanimous voice of the great national medical association proclaimed to be the first in the country, by placing him at their head. At some future time, when your hairs shall have become gray, and offspring of your own shall be about to wend their way to these very halls, unrolling the parchment which shall testify to your graduation, you will point to the signature of that man, and boast, as among the most cherished of your recollections, that you had the happiness to sit under his teaching. Long may he live to enjoy his honors, and to shed the mellow radiance of his declining years upon our school.

One further remark, and I will close. I trust that you know me too well to believe, that, in the observations I have felt called upon to make in relation to our scholastic regulations, I have had any derogatory reference to other institutions. Towards the schools of medicine which may be deemed rivals of our own, I have no ill-will. For many of their teachers I have the highest respect as men of talents and integrity; with some am upon terms of the most cordial intimacy and friendship. An honorable rivalry does not imply hostility. Why may not institutions, like individuals, throwing aside all petty jealousies, and emulous only of excellence, march side by side in the work allotted them, each putting forth its own best energies, and cheering on its neighbors, in the pursuit of the good or the great in their special sphere of duty? The multiplication of schools to a

certain extent is necessary to meet the demands of an increasing population, and a more widely spreading intelligence. The consequent competition, properly directed, is useful by inciting to increased effort. The evils which might flow from an excess of this competition may, it is hoped, be corrected by a wise supervision on the part of the great medical public whose interests are concerned. Let us then cherish a spirit of harmonious co-operation ; and, while furthering our own peculiar interests in every honorable way, let us unitedly labor for the public good, through the means of professional improvement and elevation. Let each school endeavor to expand, to the utmost, its opportunities and capacities of imparting useful knowledge ; let each take all proper measures to make its advantages known ; and then let the student, or those in whose judgement he may confide, choose the one most accordant with their own views and interests. For ourselves, gentlemen, we shall be glad to have you permanently with us ; but our good-wishes will follow you wherever you may go.

I had here proposed to close ; but the occurrences of the present week offer occasion for a few words more. It gives me pleasure to say, that, if we may be allowed to judge from present appearances, the hopes expressed in this address are likely to be realized. From all parts of the Union young men have flocked to us, bringing with them dispositions just such as we could desire ; from every quarter comes the inspiring intelligence, that the profession is disposed to support us in the stand, which, under a strong conviction of duty, we ventured to take. Never were the prospects of our school brighter than at this moment ; and, what is of vastly greater importance, never have the prospects of the profession at large been more encouraging to the friends of improvement. Everywhere there is fermentation ; the vapid inertness of former times is converted into brisk life and activity ; sooner or later will our beloved calling be clarified of the scum and dregs which have so long debased it ; and strong, pure, and bright, it will be to our whole country a cheering and supporting spirit ; the safety and the glory of the land.